

CONNOISSEURS' GUIDE TO CALIFORNIA WINE



The search for elegance in California wine could start at no better place than Pinot Noir. It took almost a century and a half for the grape to achieve a broad level of grandeur here, and its emergence as challenger to Cabernet Sauvignon for producer of the most interesting California red wines is still a little “new hat” for many folks who long for the good old days when wineries made one or two versions of the grape, in large measure the way they still do with most other varieties. In this Issue, we talk a lot about diversity of site and the influences it brings to Pinot Noir. But we would be remiss if we did not mention that Pinot Noir, for all of its tendency to find interesting nuance from site to site, is not alone in being a good reflector of soil, exposure, climate in the wines it produces. Chardonnay, the other major variety in this Issue, also is site-sensitive, and while we do not speak as much about clones in discussing Chardonnay, in part because there are fewer of them, we do know that unique clones can produce very different Chardonnays from the same site. Our third block of wines, the Rosés, are unique as well, but more for the choice of grapes that go into the making of pink wines. There is only one vineyard-designated Rosé in this Issue, but you can bet that others will be coming down the pike.

PINOT NOIR

Because Pinot Noir makes such nuanced wines and does such a good job of reflecting its site, it has encouraged many winemakers to keep their best lots separate from their main blends and to offer a long list of special bottlings. No one can taste them all, so the next best thing is to let us do that for you and then to give you our impressions of the subtle but real differences that show up in the bottle.

CHARDONNAY

Chardonnay continues to benefit from the string of cooler vintages that have visited coastal California in the past half decade. Tighter, brighter wines are easier to make when the fruit hangs for a long time without getting overheated, and the number of those types of more refined wines has continued to grow. But not to worry, you lovers of richness and intensity, there are still plenty of coastal locations that will allow wineries to make fuller, deeper, fleshier wines if that is their wont.

ROSÉ

Pink was “in” when we started Connoisseurs’ Guide back a few years ago. It sort of disappeared from view for a while, but it is making a comeback and we have the results both from the “serious” side of style spectrum and from the ultra-drinkable side as well.

In this issue

86 EDUCATED GUESS Napa Valley 2009

Clean and moderately fruity in a citrusy, green appley style with a touch of mild, slightly toasty oak joining in its light-medium and youthfully alive aromas, this wine is full in body and rounded yet not soft in feel on the palate. Its fairly open flavors are ready to enjoy now with baked or broiled chicken in light sauces.

GOOD VALUE



\$17.00